

QUICK THEOLOGY

How Do I Know I'm Saved?



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Introduction

This topic is so close to my heart, because I have seen how many members of my audience have struggled with this. This was illustrated for me a couple of weeks ago when I did an “Assumptions” engagement exercise on Instagram. Typically, an “Assumptions” exercise is when an influencer will post a question box on Instagram and say: *“Tell me your assumptions about me,”* and then they’ll answer whether those assumptions are true or false. For my version, I asked for assumptions about Christianity. Out of those assumptions, what I came to realize is that many Christians are not secure in their salvation. They struggle to believe that their salvation is actually safe, that they are actually saved.

As I talked with some people in DMs about this, I quickly realized that many of them were basically asking God to save them over and over and over again,

instead of resting in the security of their salvation—and the subsequent peace and joy of walking with Christ. Their doubt and struggle with this eternal security was causing such chaos in their Christian life, they really couldn't grow in maturity at all, much less effectively disciple other people. Since we know that God's will is our maturity, and we know that Christ's command is to evangelize, it's our job to get to the root of why we struggle so much with eternal security—which we seek to do in this very book.

I feel so strongly about this topic. First of all, I am a Wesleyan-Armenian Christian. This means that my theology adheres more closely to libertarian freewill when it comes to salvation. In this, I believe that God initiates salvation. He reaches out with his grace by His Holy Spirit, prompting humanity to respond as they will. We have been given a will by our God, and we can choose whether to respond to the Holy Spirit (and to continue walking by the Spirit) throughout our Christian life—or not.

Now, this is in contrast to what's known as the Determinist framework. In a Determinist framework, members believe that God actually regenerates a person by His spirit and gives them the will to say "yes" to salvation. So, God chooses who He will save, He

regenerates them by his spirit, and then He calls to them, and that person will absolutely say yes to God, because God gave them the ability to do so. This embraces Calvinistic beliefs, and is also called Monergism. My beliefs, (known as the Wesleyan-Armenian school of thought), is called Synergism.

So, being a Wesleyan-Armenian, I see people in the Armenian camp who go to the extreme of constantly doubting their salvation, as they have elevated the human will above what Scripture teaches. However, I also work with some Calvinists who struggle to truly rest in assurance that they are members of the elect. However, both struggles boil down to a single, core belief: At the end of the day, the only way you really know you are elect is because you're a believer. And you're only a believer if you are, indeed, elect. So, both schools of thought result in circular reasoning, where the question is: *"Am I really assured? Do I know for sure that I'm saved?"*

In this book, I'm going to be looking at first three primary doctrinal standpoints on eternal security, and then I'm going to be sharing with you some passages and suggestions to help you to walk in assurance of your salvation—if indeed you are truly saved. We'll talk about that whether or not you are truly saved at the end of the book as well.

With this in mind, let's start by addressing the three primary doctrinal standpoints on eternal security. I took these from Richard Cords—but these are pretty consistent across denominations.

The three doctrinal standpoints on eternal security or assurance of your salvation are:

- The doctrine of eternal security: This is often associated with traditionalism, which is a word associated with the Southern Baptist Convention. This idea is generally more common among traditional Baptists.

- The doctrine of conditional security. This is generally known as a traditional Armenian position. Some in Arminianism might also hold to the traditional eternal security view, but weave in elements of an eternal security-traditionalism—resulting in a conditional security-believing Arminian.

- The doctrine of perseverance of the saints: This is more commonly known as Calvinism.



Eternal Security

We're going to start this book by talking about the doctrine of eternal security. Some of the most well-known teachers who hold to eternal security would be Charles Stanley and Dr. Tony Evans. This school of thought states that those who are truly born again have a new nature given to them by God, accompanied by the Holy Spirit—meaning that they will not permanently fall away. If they do end up falling away, this doctrine adheres to the belief that they probably were never saved in the first place. In the doctrine of eternal security, there really isn't any fear of a believer ever losing their salvation—as they believe that once someone is saved, they're always saved, no matter what their sanctification process (or lack thereof) is like. But in the context of a lack of sanctification under this core belief system, Dr. Stanley or Dr. Evans would say: *"If you are living like hell,*

basically, you should be asking yourself, 'Am I truly saved? Did I ever actually surrender to the Lord in the first place?' Because I am truly, willfully walking in sin and I don't care." This is a brief summary of the doctrine of eternal security.



Conditional Security

Conditional security is assurance in Arminian doctrine. It means that you presently knowing Christ are secure, but you have the potential of being able to ultimately walk away. Now, I say walk away versus fall away, because there are actually two different positions within Arminianism. There is the reformed Armenian position, and then there's the Wesleyan-Armenian position. The reformed Armenian position is the one that I lean towards, personally. This school of thought is closer to eternal security, or the "traditionalist" view. I mean this in the sense that a person who rejects Christ, or who "walks away" has to do it intentionally. It can't be like, *"Oops, I sinned so much, and now all of a sudden, I'm no longer in Christ,"* which is more of the Wesleyan holiness view. As far as timeline goes, the Wesleyan teaching of holiness in the role of salvation began right around

Charles Finney's lifetime—about the mid-1800s. He was one of the most prominent Wesleyan evangelists at the time, and did preach this as a core part of his outreach. Part of the reason Finney stressed this point so much is that he was grieved by Christians living sinful and unrepentant lives. He was hated by the Calvinists of the time for a variety of reasons. I can see why and agree with the Calvinists on certain doctrinal points. However, there were also things Finney did that were good—such as his concern over the Christian thought process of: *“Once saved, always saved.”* This divide prompted the crux of the Second Great Awakening, driven by the Wesleyan–Arminianism under Finney rather than Calvinism as we saw in the First Great Awakening.

I do want to note something important. The difference between those two Awakenings had a lot to do with assurance of salvation and the requirement for holiness. Between the First and Second Great Awakenings, the people of the church got lazy and they began to believe: *“You know what? It doesn't matter how I live. I'm saved. I'm a member of the church. I'm getting what I need.”* In a sense, the dichotomy between the two was a return to the old Catholic model before the Reformation. Believers were actively walking in sin and corruption—so, Finney called them to repentance, using the “fire